

Introduction from the Researcher

In spring 1992, a committee of the India Association of Minnesota met to discuss how to preserve the history of immigrants of Asian Indian heritage. This committee recognized that the stories of the earliest Asian Indian immigrants (who arrived in the late 1950's and early 60's) would soon be lost as many of these people retired, moved back to India, became senile, or died. India has a long tradition of strong families and strong community ties. It is valuable to capture these stories to celebrate accomplishments and document struggles. India Association also seeks to broaden awareness about the Asian Indian community in larger society. As a group, Asian Indian immigrants have been highly successful in the United States. They are generally well-educated, hard working, and well-accepted by greater society. My personal interest in this project is my own two children, who are adopted from India. I wanted them to feel proud of their ethnic and cultural heritage; to understand that many other Indians have successfully made their way in American society.

In conducting this oral history, I have been greatly assisted by Godan Nambudiripad and Ram Gada. These gentlemen have tirelessly worked to identify a diverse cross-section of the community. Every effort was made to insure broad representation based on religion, gender, language group, occupation, and age at immigration. The goal of the project has been to record experiences of Asian Indian immigrants. Each immigrant described briefly their family of origin, the social context in which they were raised and how they decided to immigrate to the United States. A heavy focus was placed on values and attitudes; comparing and contrasting the "Indian way" with the "American way" especially as it relates to family, marriage, parenting, work, and community life. Interviewees were asked about their association within Indian social groups or religious organizations in the U.S.

Retirement plans and leisure activities were also included in the questions. Interviews were conducted in the homes and businesses of the subjects. Most interviews were two hours long and were transcribed from audiotape to written transcript. All subjects edited the transcripts before they were released to the public.

A special thank you to James Fogerty and Deborah Miller of the Minnesota Historical Society for their technical assistance and moral support. Both were always responsive to my questions and helpful in every way.

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